

REMARKS

Claims 16, 27, 31-34 and 36-37 are pending in the present application. In the final Office Action of March 29, 2006, claims 31-34 and 36 were allowed and claims 16, 27 and 37 were rejected. Applicant hereby amends claims 16, 27 and 37, and traverses the rejections as follows.

Response to Drawing Objection

The Examiner has objected to the drawings filed on January 23, 2006 because each of the sheets is not identified in the top margin as a "Replacement Sheet" pursuant to 37 CFR 1.121(d). With this Response and Amendment, Applicant has submitted corrected formal drawings to address this objection.

Response to Claim Objections

The Examiner has objected to claims 16 and 27 on the ground that the step of "using a thin-wall deep socket" in each of those claims is not related to the recited socket hole. Applicant has amended claims 16 and 27 to recite that the thin-wall deep socket is "inserted in the socket hole."

The Examiner has objected to claim 27, requesting that "a" be inserted before "length" in line 7 of the claim. Applicant has amended claim 27 accordingly.

Response to Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 16, 27 and 37 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kontra (US 2,565,659) in view of Winchester (US 3,380,267). Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections.

A finding of obviousness under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) requires that all claim limitations of the Applicant's invention must be taught or suggested by the prior art. MPEP § 2143.03. Applicant respectfully submits that Kontra and Winchester, taken alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest all of the elements of Applicant's claims 16, 27 and 37.

Kontra and Winchester do not disclose or teach all of the recited steps of claims 16 and 27. At the very least, neither Kontra nor Winchester disclose or teach threadedly engaging a threaded fastener with a threaded hole using a thin-wall deep socket, as recited in each of claims

16 and 27. Instead, Winchester discloses unthreaded latching projections (15) that engage a rectangular hole (14) to hold the housing (6) in a closed position. Moreover, Kontra teaches away from using a thin-wall deep socket to engage a threaded fastener. As shown in FIGs. 3 and 4 of Kontra, the threaded fastener 24 has an enlarged head 26 that closely fits the opening of a bore 23. A key 30 is fitted into a slot in the head 26 to insert the fastener 24. When inserted, the enlarged head 26 fits closely in the bore 23 such that one could not fit a socket over the head 26 to fully engage the fastener 24 into the bore 23 as shown in FIG. 3. Thus, even if one combines the teachings of Kontra and Winchester, as the Examiner proposes, that combination does not teach the use of a thin-wall deep socket. Applicant respectfully submits, therefore, that Kontra and Winchester do not render claims 16 and 27 unpatentable.

Likewise, Kontra and Winchester do not disclose or teach all of the recited steps of claim 37. Claim 37 is directed to a method of preventing disconnection of a coupling using a device having (i) first and second halves that are mateable to form an opening, the first and second halves each having an inner surface, (ii) a plurality of holes defined in the first and second halves, the plurality of holes including at least one socket hole, wherein the socket hole has a length comprising a first diameter portion and a second diameter portion, the socket hole is enclosed along the first diameter portion and the second diameter portion, the first diameter is less than the second diameter, and the socket hole is defined in one of the first and second halves such that the first diameter portion is proximate the inner surface of said one of said first and second halves, (iii) at least one threaded hole defined in the other of the first and second halves, and (iv) at least one threaded fastener. The method includes the steps of (a) fitting the first and second halves directly over the coupling, such that the coupling is disposed in the opening; (b) aligning the socket hole with the threaded hole; and (c) inserting the threaded fastener into the socket hole and threadedly engaging the threaded fastener with the threaded hole. Claim 37 further recites that the socket hole has an opening proximate the second diameter portion, the threaded fastener defines a head, and *“the step of inserting said threaded fastener comprises inserting said threaded fastener such that said head does not protrude through said opening.”* (Emphasis added.)

The Examiner asserts that Kontra shows a fastener having a head (26/30) that does not protrude through a socket hole opening (shown in phantom in FIG. 3) proximate the second diameter portion (23) of a socket hole. The Examiner apparently reads the recited "opening" to mean the opening of the first diameter portion (*i.e.*, the smaller diameter portion) of the socket hole, which opening exists only when the device is disassembled, as shown in FIG. 3 of Applicant's specification. Applicant respectfully suggests that, when the device is assembled such that the threaded fastener is inserted and engaged, as shown in FIG. 2 of Applicant's specification (or as shown in FIG. 3 of Kontra), there is no such opening. Instead, the opening of Applicant's device through which the fastener head does not protrude is the larger opening of the first diameter portion, which opening is distant the second diameter portion, as shown in FIG. 2 of Applicant's specification. To emphasize this point, Applicant has amended claim 37 to recite that the opening through which the fastener head does not protrude proximate the second diameter portion also is distant the first diameter portion.

Kontra and Winchester, either alone or in combination, do not disclose or teach all of the recited steps of claim 37. At the very least, they fail to disclose or teach the step of inserting a threaded fastener such that the head of the fastener does not protrude through the socket hole opening that is proximate the second diameter portion of the hole and distant the first diameter portion of the hole, as recited in claim 37. As discussed above, Winchester does not teach or disclose using a threaded fastener. While Kontra discloses a threaded fastener, the head 26 of that fastener protrudes out of the opening in the bore 23 that is distant the smaller diameter portion of the bore 19 when the fastener is inserted into the bore, as shown in FIG. 3 of Kontra. Applicant respectfully submits, therefore, that Kontra and Winchester do not render claim 37 unpatentable.

Conclusion

Applicant respectfully submits that all of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicant therefore requests that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections, that they be withdrawn and that the claims be allowed. It is believed that a full and complete reply has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner

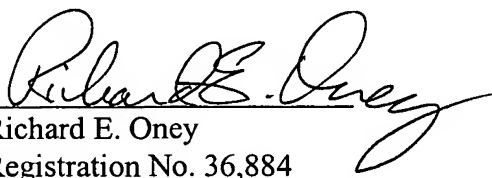
Response and Amendment
US Patent Application No. 10/693,267

believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fee required or to deposit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 503289.

Dated: September 29, 2006

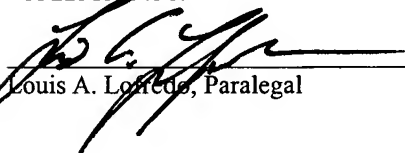
Respectfully submitted,


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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING PURSUANT TO 37 C.F.R. § 1.10

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I hereby certify that this paper and all documents and any fee referred to herein are being deposited on the date indicated above with the U.S. Postal Service "Express Mail Post Office to Addressee" service under 37 C.F.R. § 1.10, postage prepaid and addressed to the Mail Stop RCE, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450.


Louis A. Lofredo, Paralegal

9-29-06
Date of Signature